

place. McTavish was an older man, but bigger and even more muscular. They fought for five and forty minutes in the center of a yelling crowd. At last both ceased from weariness. There was still two kings in the lumber country.

"I'll meet you on Christmas day," snarled Sorenson, between his swollen lips, and McTavish, who could not speak, nodded. So the two kings separated and went their ways.

Sorenson did not forget. He ceased drinking in September and devoted himself to training. He did not even smoke. The thought that there might be another king in the lumber country was intolerable to him. The story of the impending fight went all up and down the land.

"Jan," said Father Flynn, "you are going to fight McTavish on Christmas day. You are going to try to maim him, so as to be the strongest man in the country. Give it up, Jan, or you will regret it."

That time Jan Sorenson let loose a flood of blasphemy on Father Flynn's head. All his pent-up rage broke loose, and he felt in the padre an enemy only second to McTavish. Father Flynn waited till he had done speaking.

"Jan," he said quietly, "God doesn't permit a man to grow too big for his boots. You are trusting in your strength and you are trusting in a broken reed."

Sorenson, still cursing, turned into the saloon and drank himself stupid with whisky. Only that way could he find relief for his overwrought feelings.

But for that debauch he might have won. As it was, the two men fought each other to a standstill once more. And Sorenson, staring stupidly from the ground at McTavish, also upon the ground and incapable of movement, swore that he would meet him once more and win. The fight was fixed for April 10.

All that winter Sorenson worked like a demon. His hate of McTavish

had become a madness now, and warped his brain. Each of the men was resolved to win or die the next time. They were buoyed up by the mad desire, like that which comes to rival leaders in a caribou herd.

"Sorenson," said Father Flynn, "you have had two chances now. Give up your plan."

Sorenson turned on the padre with an oath.

"If I don't best him I'll never fight again," he said. "I'll come to you, father, and you can make one of your canting, sniveling hypocrites out of me. I'll kneel at the sinners' seat and say I'm one of them. But I tell you I'll kill the dog, padre. I'll mash him softer than the bogs in spring."

Such things, and more, Sorenson had dreamed at night when he lay sleepless in his bunk.

April 9 arrived, and Sorenson, accompanied by his followers, started off along the trail to the meeting place. They were the first to arrive; presently the other party came into sight. In the center was a stripling of eighteen or nineteen years.

"What's this? Where's McTavish?" shouted Sorenson.

"Dead," answered the young man.

"What?" yelled Sorenson wildly.

"Typhoid," explained the stripling.

"It generally gets the beefy man. I'm the new king of Watson camp now."

"You are?" screamed Sorenson, precipitating himself upon him.

That was a Homeric fight, the record of which has come down to this day. For never once did Sorenson's blows land home. He hit the air, and, in return, felt sting after sting upon his face and body. The youth's blows were light as thistledown, but they began to tell after awhile. There are no rounds in a lumbermen's battle. Before ten minutes had elapsed the big Swede was glaring at his lithe opponent out of a bloody haze.

"Come on—unless you're beaten," said the other calmly.

Sorenson, with a bull's bellow,